

Overview of the 2013 Vermont Farm To Family Program

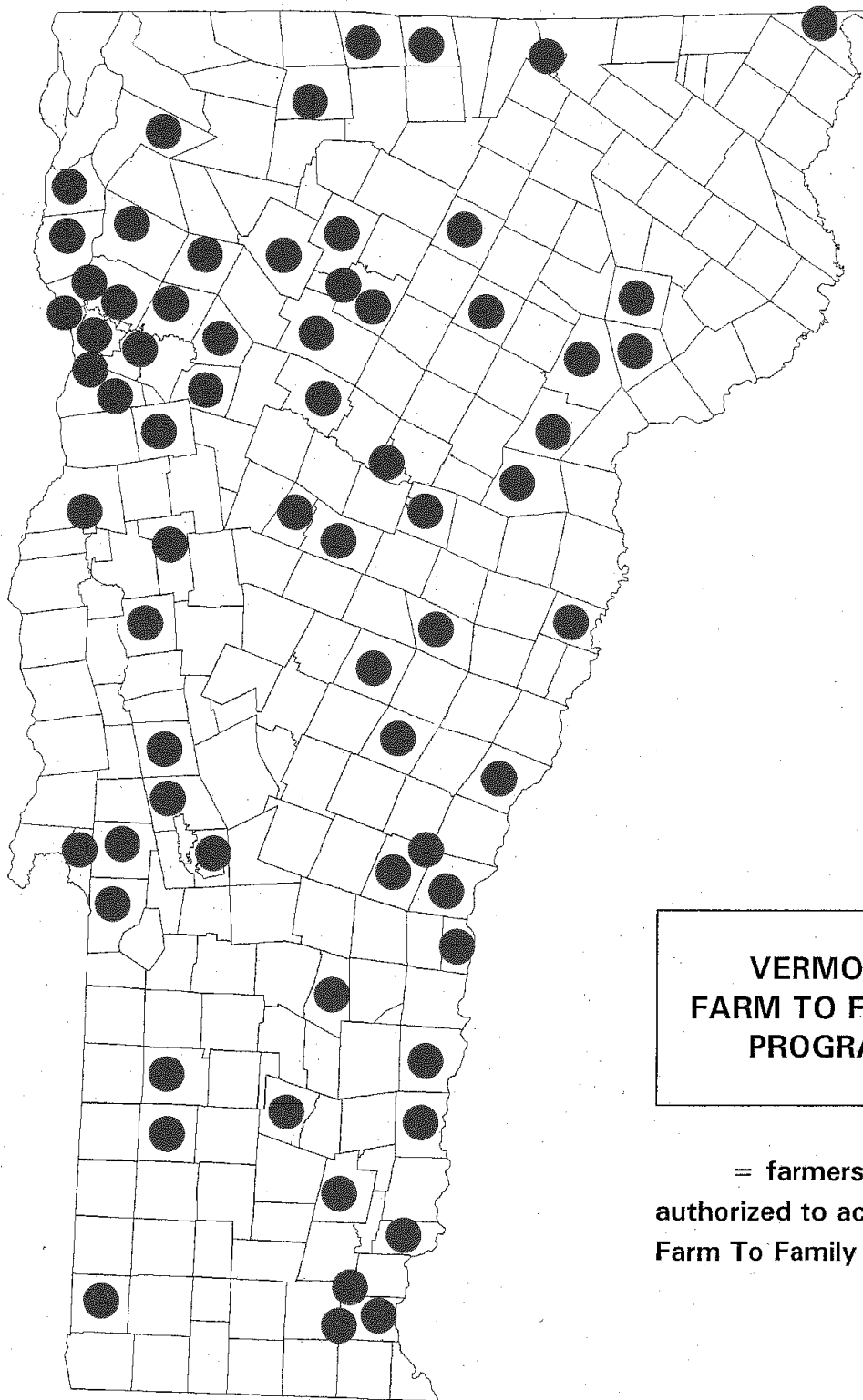
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“This summer we ate more fresh salads and cooked more vegetables than we ever have before. I just want to say thank you as we enjoyed the fresh vegetables and fruit tremendously. We do not get them too often as they cost a fortune. We were all so grateful. Everyone at the market was so friendly and it made the experience even more joyful.”
– Newport



**VERMONT
FARM TO FAMILY
PROGRAM**

= farmers market
authorized to accept the
Farm To Family coupons

2013 FARM TO FAMILY HIGHLIGHTS

“The coupons enable us to get fruit and vegetables we could not otherwise afford. It also gives us a chance to support the people who work growing and selling the vegetables.” – St. Albans

The Vermont Farm To Family Program has two objectives. One is to increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by people who are nutritionally at-risk. The other is to increase sales at multi-vendor farmers markets where consumers can interact directly with produce growers and other shoppers. The program accomplishes both by giving lower income Vermonters coupons redeemable only for fresh vegetables or fruits sold at authorized farmers markets.

- ***Farm To Family improves diets.*** The coupons may only be used to buy fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs. Over 77% of recipients surveyed said that, as a result of the program, they ate more fruits and vegetables last summer than usual and 83% also plan to eat more fresh produce all year round. Almost every recipient surveyed (98%) said the produce quality at the markets was at least as good as the produce quality at grocery stores, and more than 80% said it was better.
- ***The benefits are targeted to nutritionally at-risk Vermonters.*** Only income-eligible people may receive coupons. \$161,760 in coupons were issued to 4,815 households comprising about 12,400 Vermonters. More than half included children and/or pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women. At least 31% included someone aged 60 or older. The remaining households were other low income Vermonters, such as adults with disabilities and unemployed or low-wage workers without children.
- ***The program introduces people to new experiences.*** Farm To Family is now twenty-seven years old, yet over 31% of the recipients surveyed said that 2013 was the first year they took part. 19% said they had never gone to a farmers market before getting the coupons. 47% said they used the coupons to buy fruits or vegetables they had never tried before.
- ***Farm To Family is educational for both consumers and farmers.*** In addition to learning how, where and when to shop for produce at farmers markets, 53% of recipients surveyed said they learned new ways to prepare fruits and vegetables, and 45% learned new ways to store fresh produce to keep it from spoiling. Coupon shoppers have inspired participating farmers to do more customer education (e.g., advice on how to select or prepare fresh produce) or improve their display signage to make it easier for market customers to identify food types and prices.

“I ate raw kale for the first time and tried marinating it in balsamic vinegar and minced garlic. Delicious!” – Clarendon

“Coupon program helps to contribute to social pleasantry and entertaining happening during visits to farmers markets. They are a valuable contribution to a healthy and happy community.” – Randolph senior

- ***The program strengthens farmers markets.*** Coupon redemptions totaled \$123,075 in 2013. Coupons were redeemable at 69 market sites in Vermont, and 322 produce growers took part. 28% of the recipients surveyed shopped at more than one market. 78% spent money there in addition to the coupons, and 71% said they returned to the market to shop after they ran out of coupons to spend there. Participating farmers agree that many coupon shoppers become regular cash customers at the market.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND FUNDING

“This program is a great way for motivated mothers to help their children eat healthy. I also love supporting my local farmers.” – Island Pond

Farm To Family is administered by the Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division (ESD). Responding to concerns linking health risks to low fruit and vegetable consumption, it was conceived as a community and agricultural development venture that also would improve the diets of families with limited food budgets. It began in 1987 as a joint project of the Agency of Human Services and Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. The program now distributes four groups of coupons:

- ***Since 1987, state-funded coupons issued by Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to income-eligible households, both elderly and non-elderly.*** This nonfederal service was a foundation upon which the rest of the program was built, both in Vermont and nationally.
- ***Since 1989, coupons issued by the Department of Health to participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).*** The benefits are funded by a federal WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) grant to ESD. In 1989, Vermont was one of four states whose programs were the models for a national demonstration project that provided 70% USDA matching funds to test the feasibility of expanding the service nationwide. WIC is a federal health services program for low income pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding women and children under the age of five. The coupons boost WIC’s nutritional impact while also promoting farmers markets. Congress limited federal benefits to WIC participants, but let Vermont use its nonfederal CAA coupons to supply the 30% state match. The federal expansion tripled Vermont’s coupon volume and stimulated farmers market activity statewide. The WIC FMNP became a permanent federal program in 1992. States now only have to provide matching funds for administrative costs rather than the entire federal WIC FMNP grant, but Vermont continued to distribute the popular nonfederal coupons.
- ***Since 2001, coupons issued by CAAs to income-eligible households with someone aged 60 or older.*** These are supported by a federal Senior FMNP grant administered by the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). DAIL transfers part of its grant to ESD to fund CAA distribution of senior-only coupons. As allowed by federal policy, DAIL uses the rest of the SFMNP grant to provide fresh produce grown on Vermont community supported agriculture (CSA) farms to residents of dozens of senior housing sites.

***“It’s so great to get the kids more fruits and veggies during the summertime. I’m not sure I would have gotten to a farmers market if I didn’t have coupons.”
– West Topsham***

***“It is very helpful, saving money on products that are homegrown and healthier for you.”
– Rutland senior***

- ***Since 2010, coupons issued by the Health Department to participants in their Ladies First program.*** Farm To Family coupons promote the health objectives of this federally-funded cancer prevention program for low income women.

The 1987 pilot project involved just three markets and \$6,500 in coupons. The 2013 program had 69 market sites. Its \$154,000 budget was supported by a \$75,000 federal WIC FMNP grant to ESD, \$37,876 in federal Senior FMNP funds, and \$6,000 in federal Ladies First program funds. State dollars funded the balance, most of which (\$24,000) was earmarked for nonfederal coupon redemptions.

***“I’ve always had a garden and eaten veggies, just less now because of money and age. Coupons are very helpful. It’s hard to get good vegetables as they are so expensive.”
– East Hardwick senior***

Coupon distribution begins in late June and lasts until September 30 or coupon supplies run out, whichever comes first. Most coupons are issued by mid-summer because coupon demand is strong in many areas, the market season is short and the coupons expire October 31.

The coupons are in \$30 books of ten \$3.00 coupons. Except for serial numbers and paper colors to help distinguish funding sources, all Farm To Family coupons are identical in terms of where they may be spent and what they may purchase. They may only buy locally grown fruits, vegetables

and herbs sold fresh and unprocessed at farmers markets enrolled in the program. The program defines "locally grown" as grown on Vermont land or on U.S. land within thirty miles of the state border.

Participating vendors agree in writing to accept coupons only for eligible foods and only at participating market sites. Markets pay the vendors face value for coupons accepted and use postage-paid envelopes to send the redeemed coupons to ESD for reimbursement.

All coupon recipients get a brochure that identifies the eligible foods, lists locations and schedules for participating markets, and has a Vermont harvest calendar and farmers market shopping tips. They are instructed that vendors may not give them cash change for a coupon. The federal ban on cash change was not an issue when Farm To Family began and coupons were worth \$1 each, giving recipients a lot of flexibility when shopping at the markets. The denomination rose to \$2 due to federal rules requiring ESD to trace the path of each individual coupon printed. In 2005, having secured much more federal money for coupon benefits, ESD raised the denomination to \$3 to reduce coupon printing and processing costs and keep the program affordable.

“I LOVE farmers markets! I learned more about fermented foods and easy ways to make pickles and sauerkraut. It was fun getting ‘change’ as onions or other produce items if entire coupon was not used up.” – Milton

COUPON RECIPIENTS AND BENEFITS

4,815 households comprising about 12,400 Vermonters received Farm To Family coupons in 2013. Over half (50.2%) were families that included minor children or women who were pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding. Elderly households represented at least 31% of the caseload. The remaining recipients were other low income Vermonters, such as adults with disabilities and low wage workers.

“My 2 year old ate onions, corn and more veggies than I thought he would ever eat. Really helped us eat better. Thank you so much!” – Wallingford

WIC Program Participants: Federal rules restrict coupons to WIC participants over the age of four months – Vermont sets the minimum at six months – and caps the benefit at \$30 per WIC participant per year. A family may include more than one WIC participant, such as a breastfeeding mother, her baby and her 4 year old.

Vermont only had enough federal WIC FMNP funds to serve about 18% of its eligible WIC participants. Therefore, local Health (VDH) offices provided families with more than one coupon-eligible WIC participant just one \$30 coupon book initially, and another \$30 book if there were any undistributed coupons left after their scheduled Farm To Family sessions ended. This allowed more WIC families to take part in the program.

VDH issued \$30 coupon books to 2,686 WIC participants, 76% of whom were children aged six months to five years. The remainder went to pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women. 2,114 WIC families took part in the program, for an average of \$35 in coupon benefits per family for the year. Of the \$80,730 in coupons issued to WIC participants, \$59,184 (73.3%) were redeemed.

Ladies First Program Participants: 2013 was the fourth year VDH provided Farm To Family coupons to some participants in Ladies First, a federally-funded health screening and cancer prevention program for women with limited incomes. \$6,000 in coupons went to 200 participants, and \$3,762 worth of those coupons (62.7%) were redeemed.

“I go there every Sunday and buy things I do not know how to cook. It was fun with my children and I love it. The coupons make sure I go to farmers market and try new things and make something out of it. Thanks.” – Colchester

“Because of this program, I was able to get fresher vegetables for my son and myself that I wouldn’t normally be able to afford with my SSDI income and limited food stamps.” – Newport

CAA Coupon Recipients: Community Action Agencies work with low income Vermonters of all ages and have been distributing Farm To Family coupons since 1987. A household must have income below 185% of the federal poverty limit to get coupons from a CAA. For example, the monthly gross income in 2013 needed to be under \$1,772 for a single person or \$3,011 for a family of three. 82% of the CAA coupon recipients were also taking part in

3SquaresVT, the federal program formerly called food stamps. That program offers significantly larger and more flexible food benefits than Farm To Family and is active year-round. Dozens of Vermont farmers markets are now equipped to accept 3SquaresVT benefits that are now provided on debit cards called electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards instead of in paper coupons.

CAAs serve families whose children are too old to qualify for WIC. ESD weights coupon allocations to local CAA offices to favor those serving more children and seniors. Elderly households represent less than a fifth of the eligible population, but have consistently comprised over a third of the CAA coupon caseload. That proportion doubled after the arrival of federal Senior FMNP funds. In 2013, CAAs gave coupons to 2,501 households consisting of 3,907 individuals, of whom 513 were children and 1,675 were age sixty or older.

“Excellent, big help, thanks. I try to shop at farmers market as much as possible, but it is expensive. Good social day, too.” – Morrisville senior

“Thanks so much for including me in the Farm To Family coupon program! I enjoyed using them very much. Walking between the different vendors and seeing their produce is so special. Choosing just the right vegetables for me was GREAT! All of the produce was delicious.” – Charleston

The CAAs work with about 40,000 eligible non-WIC households and have relatively few coupons to give out. Coupon redemption was weak in years when CAAs limited the annual benefit to \$15 or \$20 per household so they could give coupons to more applicants. Since the federal regulations require ESD to trace every coupon to an eligible recipient, and if redeemed, to the specific market and vendor, ESD must carefully account for every coupon. Given these considerations, ESD standardized the CAA benefit at \$30 in coupons per household per year, regardless of household size or composition.

***“I made a special meal for a friend with the food I purchased at the farmers market. I made an AWESOME squash soup, some apple crisp, and baked some eggplant. I also served fish that I had caught! I ate very well this summer thanks to you folks. Thanks for the coupons!”
– Burlington***

CAA Nonfederal Coupon Recipients: Vermont's nonfederal coupons provided the program infrastructure that enabled Farm To Family to grow. They let the CAAs help Vermonters whose income levels put them at nutritional risk but who do not qualify for WIC or senior coupons. The state-funded coupons also give the program flexibility to meet local coupon demands that can be hard to predict. In 2013, the CAAs distributed \$30,090 in coupons funded with state dollars. The \$30 coupon books went to 1,003 households, of which 21% were families with children. \$23,514 (78.1%) worth of the nonfederal coupons were redeemed.

CAA Senior FMNP Coupon Recipients: 1,498 households with someone aged sixty or older received \$44,940 in coupons, of which \$36,615 (81.5%) were redeemed. The federal Senior FMNP funds available from DAIL covered the cost of those redemptions, as well as printing costs generated by senior coupon distribution.

COUPON REDEMPTION

Full coupon redemption is not expected in a program intended to introduce people to new shopping and dietary experiences and strengthen farmers markets. Most new markets start small and take years to become firmly established with participation that consistently includes several produce vendors. It takes consumers practice to learn how to select and prepare fresh produce and to shop at markets in a region with a short growing season. Most coupon recipients have limited options for child care and transportation. WIC parents have very young children and often work one or more jobs that make it hard to get to a market that is only open a few hours a week. It is a challenge for many low income residents, especially seniors, to get to a site that is not within walking distance. The selection of fresh produce is very limited at some markets, another barrier to full coupon redemption.

“I love the Farm To Family program and being able to buy fresh. I was able to have a conversation with a mature young man about farming and the challenges that go with it.” – Milton

“This is a wonderful program! I am learning to can fruits and vegetables this year. Having the coupons made it possible for me to purchase more to can than I could have afforded at the grocery store. Combined with what we grew in our garden, we now have tomato sauce, pickles, applesauce and more for the winter!” – Fairfield

Based on projected coupon redemption rates, ESD allowed \$161,760 in coupons to be issued in 2013. They went to 4,815 households, for an overall benefit average of \$34 in coupons per household for the season. \$123,075 in coupons (76.1%) were redeemed, stronger than the 74.5% rate for 2012. Vermont farmland has been recovering from the damage inflicted in 2011 by Tropical Storm Irene. The weak economy and consumer support for 'buying local' also boost the likelihood that coupons will be redeemed.

Vermont's WIC FMNP redemption rate tends to exceed the national average (e.g., 72% in 2012, compared to the 56% rate nationally). This may be because farmers markets are more accessible in Vermont than in other states, and coupon issuance is combined with nutrition education activities that often take place at the markets themselves.

For the coupons issued by CAAs, the redemption rate was lower among non-elderly households (78%) than among seniors (82%). They may have trouble fitting a trip to the market into their schedules or decide that coupons redeemable only for fresh produce do not justify the time and cost to drive to the nearest participating farmers market, especially if they have few coupons left to spend. Some participants hang onto coupons until after Labor Day, then forget the market's closing date or find that bad weather reduced the selection of fresh produce available.

“It’s great to learn about the different farms in the area and what they are growing. And nice to buy the veggies that didn’t do well in our garden this year.” – Enosburg

PARTICIPATING MARKETS AND FARMERS

***“It’s nice that we can use the coupons all over Vermont, so you see what is at the other places outside your area. I learned how to eat more healthy and learned the different items and how to use them.”
– Castleton senior***

A chart at the end of this report identifies the 69 market sites authorized to accept the coupons in 2013. (Some market organizations have more than one market site.) The chart also shows the number of participating produce vendors and value of coupons redeemed at each market.

Coupon recipients get a list of the locations and schedules for participating markets and are told that the coupons may be redeemed at any of those sites. The coupons issued by the Community Action office in Burlington were spent at 24 different markets as far away as Brattleboro! This flexibility is important, as market hours and locations may not match those of shoppers. A competitive marketplace encourages

farmers to widen the selection of products they offer. Over 28% of the recipients surveyed said that they shopped at more than one market. One out of five participating farmers surveyed in 2009 said they started growing a wider variety of fruits and vegetables to sell at markets as a result of the program.

Only vendors who grew some or all of the fresh produce they sell at the market qualify to accept Farm To Family coupons. Coupon recipients are instructed to look for vendors displaying the program sign at the markets.

“The list of farmers markets with the days and times they are open was very helpful. I never realized there were so many in Vermont!” – Pownal

“This is an incredible program and I really thank you! My daughter is getting exposed to so many healthy foods by shopping at farmers market. I think she is more apt to eat things like vegetables when they aren’t strange or unfamiliar. Because she sees them all out on display, she can touch them, sees a lot of other people shopping for them, too, they are just normal food for her.” – Waterbury

Farm To Family was intended to be educational. The festive atmosphere at farmers markets invites shoppers to overhear or take part in conversations with vendors or other shoppers that improve their ability to select or use fresh produce. Although most towns lack markets, single-vendor farm stands are not authorized to accept coupons. Allowing redemption at roadside or farm stands is incompatible with the objective to strengthen multi-vendor farmers markets. Including farm stands also would exceed the program budget and administrative capacity.

In 2013, Farm To Family had 322 participating produce growers, at least 67 of whom sold at more than one market. The program motivates some growers to sell at farmers markets even though the coupons would likely generate a very small part of their sales income. Redemption totals varied widely among vendors. Fifty-three redeemed no coupons, while six had coupon sales exceeding \$2,500 for the season.

<u>Coupon Sales</u>	<u># of Vendors</u>	<u>% of Vendors</u>
Less than \$50	128	39.8%
\$50 – \$99	37	11.5%
\$100 – \$249	56	17.4%
\$250 – \$499	40	12.4%
\$500 – \$749	18	5.6%
\$750 – \$999	14	4.3%
\$1000 or more	29	9.0%

“It is a great program that helps supplement our family’s produce. We have a great time at the markets and love supporting our neighbors. Hope it continues for future families.” – Hartland

Total coupon sales averaged \$382 per participating produce vendor. Some sell at farmers markets only a few days a year. Many specialize in products that do not qualify for coupon redemption, e.g., meats, eggs, prepared foods like maple products or pickles, or non-food items such as cut flowers. As a result, the median coupon sales income among participating vendors was just \$99 for the season. Feedback from farmers indicates that even those accepting few or no coupons are enthusiastic about the program.

“I like the chance to be able to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, and I like the recipes that WIC provides. Gives me a chance to try new things with the fruits and veggies I enjoy.” – Richford

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Congress funded the FMNP with two objectives. One was to provide fresh, unprepared, locally grown vegetables and fruits to people who are nutritionally at-risk, particularly low income children, seniors and women who are pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding. The other goal was to expand the awareness and use of farmers markets, to increase market sales,

and to stimulate the creation of new farmers markets and other outlets for produce grown for home consumption.

Coupon issuance to WIC participants happens at special Farm To Family venues – many at farmers markets – offering nutrition education activities and recipes using local produce. All recipients get information about the nutritional benefits of fruits and vegetables and about how, when and where to use the coupons.

“The coupons made for a fun farmers market experience. My husband loved it! We ate a lot of tomato sandwiches, which we both love, and bought some delicious squash and spinach.” – Brattleboro

“We love the coupons! It lets us get extra produce that we normally couldn’t afford. Our 3 year old loves getting to pick out a new fruit or veggie to try.” – Jericho

All coupon recipients were invited to return a survey. The results are appended, and quotations cited in this report are gleaned from those surveys. The most recent survey of participating farmers was done in 2009, and this report cites a few of its findings. Although Farm to Family is now 27 years old, over a third of the coupon recipients surveyed (31%) said that 2013 was the first year they had ever taken part. Steady caseload turnover is desirable,

“I bought extra Swiss chard and wilted it down with chicken stock. No need to add butter or vinegar. We saved the stems to add to soups and stews later. Delicious!” – Bristol

given the limitations on eligibility and the goal to increase the number of consumers using farmers markets.

The program produced many positive outcomes:

- 5,387 low income Vermonters, mostly seniors and families with children, used the coupons to buy \$123,075 worth of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables at farmers markets.
- Coupon recipients were asked to compare the quality of fresh produce at the farmers markets to its quality at their regular grocery stores. Nearly 98% said produce

quality at the markets was either better (80.4%) or about the same (17.3%) as at their grocery stores.

- Limited budgets make low income consumers reluctant to buy unfamiliar foods. Nonetheless, 47% of the recipients bought a kind of fruit or vegetable they had never tried before, including 42% of the seniors surveyed. Recipients are encouraged to ask questions of the farmers, who are usually delighted to talk about the foods they grew – how to know when it is ripe or how it may be prepared.

***“I greatly appreciated the coupons. It gave me a chance to spend time with people I have not seen in years. I also purchased a lot more vegetables, including kale, first time this year.”
– South Burlington senior***

“I enjoyed selecting delicious fruit and veggies from various farmers. The coupons definitely encouraged me to shop more frequently.” – St. Johnsbury

- In 2012, the coupon recipients also were asked to compare the prices of fresh produce at farmers markets to those at their grocery stores. Over 76% considered the farmers market prices competitive, with 36% saying prices at the markets were lower and 40% saying they were about the same.

- 53% of recipients surveyed said they learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh produce. That included 47% of the seniors surveyed.
- 45% said they learned a new way to store fresh fruits or vegetables to prevent them from spoiling, including 43% of the seniors surveyed.

“The program helps families eat better than they could afford. These coupons really help. Wish they were given out more than once a year!” – Fair Haven

***“We really enjoyed being out in the warm summer sunshine, seeing all the beautiful vegetables and fruit and chatting with the vendors. Wonderful program. Produce was delicious.”
– East Dummerston***

- 77% of recipients surveyed ate more fresh produce last summer than usual, including 81% of seniors.
- 83% said that they plan to eat more fresh produce all year-round as a result of taking part in the coupon program. This response was 86% among the seniors surveyed.

Farm To Family is an effective family and community development tool. Open-air markets turn food shopping into a social event where neighbors, children, parents and grandparents inspire each other to add variety to their diets and get to know farmers in their area.

The program promotes the formation and growth of farmers markets and expands their customer base.

- 19% of recipients surveyed said they had never been to a farmers market before getting the coupons. This percentage has declined over the program's lifetime as the familiarity and number of markets grew. Many coupon recipients take friends or neighbors with them to the market, thus increasing the number of potential farmers market customers.

***“So easy to use and definitely brought me to the farmers market more than in the past.”
– Derby Line***

“We are lucky to benefit from the program. Vendors were polite and helpful in choosing produce. We went to markets we otherwise wouldn’t go to and had a great afternoon out doing it. This is our first year using the program. During my first purchase using the coupons, I was so nervous and even felt embarrassed. When I presented my coupons, the vendor smiled and said ‘oh, great!’ I felt so much better afterwards. We had a delicious stir fry for dinner.” – Stockbridge

- 28% of recipients surveyed – 29% among seniors – said that they shopped at more than one participating market.
- The financial impact on farmers extends beyond the value of coupons redeemed. When asked if they spent money at the markets in addition to their coupons, 78% of the recipients surveyed said yes. 71% of recipients who had spent all their coupons by the time they completed the survey said they had returned to the market to shop without coupons. Participating farmers have agreed that many Farm To Family coupon shoppers become regular cash customers of the market.

ESD rarely surveys vendors because there is less turnover among participating farmers than among coupon recipients. 25% of the farmers surveyed in 2009 said they had been taking part in Farm To Family for over a decade, some since its 1987 inception. They reported that, as a result of the program, they increased the number of days or hours they sold at farmers markets, and:

“In my early years, I planted a vegetable garden, but now at 85, I must rely on purchasing fresh vegetables. This program has been such a help. For instance, I spent more on beets using the organic stems and greens as salads for the first time, a big stretch of fresh foods. Thank you!” – Essex Junction senior

“I liked that I had these additional funds to spend at the farmers market. I also liked meeting each of the vendors that took the coupons. I could actually interact with the growers and farmers who took the time to grow their food organically.” – Montpelier

- 21% started growing a wider variety of fruits or vegetables to sell at farmers markets.
- 27% improved their displays to make it easier for shoppers to identify food types and prices.
- 23% were doing more consumer education, such as offering product recipes or samples.

When Farm To Family began issuing coupons targeted to seniors, this motivated farmers to include more traditional garden vegetables, such as beets and green beans, among the foods they grow to sell at farmers markets. ESD also has observed

attitude shifts over the program's 27-year lifespan. Farmers initially reluctant to take part in a "government" program evolved into hearty fans. In the past, many recipients commented that they did not like farmers markets because markets sold organic foods, but survey comments now often cheer the opportunity to buy local foods that were grown organically.

Vermont was one of four states whose 1987 farmers market projects inspired the creation of national WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP) that provide federal

"It's great! We love it. We always see people we know at the market and meet new people every year. It reminds me of growing up on the farm and selling vegetables at our stand at home. I try to introduce at least one household to the farmers markets every year. This year was my oldest brother and sister-in-law." – St. Albans

support for the programs operating in most states. People nationwide now benefit from FMNPs that uniquely merge health and agriculture promotion and put money directly into the pockets of small-scale family farmers.

Farm To Family is intended to be an educational and agricultural stimulus program, so its full value cannot be measured in terms of the dollar value of coupons distributed or redeemed. It is lauded by farmers who make little money on coupon sales, yet welcome this user-friendly way to connect consumers with the farming community.

Families receiving just a handful of coupons are enthusiastic about the program and often describe the experience as "fun." How many other federal programs can make that claim? Young children are discovering the variety of foods produced in Vermont, and are learning about those

foods from the farmers who grow them. Older Vermonters are enjoying the flavor and freshness of just-picked fruits and vegetables they remember from their youth but can no longer afford or grow on their own.

"I froze 9 POUNDS of tomatoes! This is a wonderful program! Healthy in terms of the fresh produce but also healthy emotionally to connect with our local community of farmers and buyers." – Moretown

"The program does influence people who would not usually go to markets to go. It's great for the community as well." – Ripton

"A great way to get your kids involved with fruits and vegetables!" – East Haven

The Farm To Family Program helps keep Vermont land open and productive. It has helped make local farmers markets more plentiful, more successful and more attractive to all consumers, not just to the coupon recipients. This has a positive impact on the uncertain financial status of family farms and on the vitality of local communities.

2013 Vermont Farm To Family Program – SURVEY OF COUPON RECIPIENTS

All participants were invited to respond to a survey after they had taken their coupons to a market. Surveys were returned by 436 participants, representing about 9% of the households that got the coupons in 2013.

First-Timers: Although Farm To Family began in 1987, nearly a third (31.4%) of recipients surveyed said that 2013 was the first year they had ever received the coupons. 18.7% said they had never gone to a farmers market before taking part in the Farm To Family Program.

Impact on Farmers Markets: The 2013 program had participating farmers market sites in 69 locations throughout Vermont, and survey respondents indicated that they had visited 60 of those sites in 2013. 28.2% of survey respondents checked that they went to more than one market. 70.8% said they returned to the market to shop during the 2013 season after they ran out of coupons to spend there, and 77.6% said they spent money at the markets in addition to their Farm To Family coupons.

How did coupon shoppers think the quality of fresh fruits and vegetables at the farmers markets compared to the produce quality at their regular grocery store?

80.4% – Better 17.3% – About the same 0% – Worse 2.3% – Don't know

Because of Farm To Family Program, they or their family...	<u><i>YES</i></u>	<u><i>NO</i></u>	<u><i>NOT SURE</i></u>
ate more fresh fruits and vegetables this summer than usual	77.2%	17.0%	5.8%
plan to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables all year round	83.2%	9.7%	7.1%
learned a new way to prepare or cook fresh fruits or vegetables	53.2%	39.1%	7.7%
learned a new way to store fresh fruits/vegetables to prevent spoiling	45.0%	45.0%	10.0%
bought a kind of fruit or vegetable they had never tried before	47.1%	48.8%	4.1%

Comments were added to 144 of the surveys, reflecting certain themes:

- short expressions of thanks or kudos for the program (37)
- the coupons help low income people, make fresh produce affordable (36)
- program helps diet, promotes healthy eating, encourages people to try new foods (22)
- produce at farmers markets is high quality, fresher (20)
- increase coupon benefit levels, offer year-round (14)
- likes supporting farmers, helping local economy and community (14)
- program is educational, fun, promotes family bonding (13)
- fresh produce at farmers markets is expensive (12, including 10 seniors)
- likes variety and social atmosphere at farmers markets (10)
- unhappy with a market or vendor, e.g., unappealing/limited produce selection or accessible parking (9)
- keep program going, wants coupons again next year (8)
- allow coupon redemption for other types of foods, e.g., eggs, meats, baked goods (3)
- market vendors are friendly, polite, helpful (3)
- wishes markets were open more days or longer hours to be more accessible (3)
- coupon availability should be publicized, more accessible, issue coupons earlier in season (3)
- wishes they could use SNAP EBT card or WIC Fruit & Veggie card at their markets (2)
- wishes markets offered more fruit (2)
- single-survey comments: senior thought \$30 in coupons was too many; need a program to teach kids how to preserve fruits and vegetables

2013 Vermont Farm To Family Program / Coupon Redemptions By Farmers Market						
Participating Farmers Markets (63 markets open at 69 sites)	Enrolled Produce Vendors	Dollar Value of Redemptions By Coupon Funding Source				
		Federal WIC Coupons	Fed. Senior Coupons	Fed. Ladies First Cpn	NonFederal Coupons	Total 2013 Redemptions
Barre	5	\$1,311	\$1,326	\$147	\$642	\$3,426
Bellows Falls	6	\$933	\$450	\$42	\$306	\$1,731
Bradford	3	\$27	\$81	\$12	\$75	\$195
Brandon	5	\$360	\$150	\$30	\$96	\$636
Brattleboro (two local sites)	19	\$3,834	\$2,031	\$129	\$822	\$6,816
Bristol	4	\$540	\$123	\$72	\$132	\$867
Burlington (City Hall Park)	20	\$4,593	\$2,844	\$222	\$2,418	\$10,077
Caledonia (Danville, St. Johnsbury)	11	\$2,016	\$1,746	\$12	\$1,281	\$5,055
Capital City (Montpelier)	15	\$2,898	\$1,473	\$276	\$456	\$5,103
Castleton	7	\$105	\$336	\$0	\$120	\$561
Champlain Islands (Grand Isle, So Hero)	9	\$618	\$306	\$33	\$114	\$1,071
Chelsea	4	\$360	\$204	\$21	\$36	\$621
Craftsbury Common	2	\$60	\$6	\$0	\$24	\$90
Dorset	8	\$231	\$87	\$39	\$12	\$369
Enosburgh Falls	6	\$819	\$675	\$15	\$432	\$1,941
Five Corners (Essex Junction)	4	\$717	\$168	\$105	\$183	\$1,173
Groton	3	\$36	\$117	\$0	\$0	\$153
Hardwick	5	\$822	\$483	\$12	\$237	\$1,554
Hartland	3	\$30	\$0	\$0	\$9	\$39
Hinesburg	3	\$330	\$180	\$30	\$51	\$591
Jay Village	5	\$36	\$3	\$60	\$21	\$120
Jeffersonville	4	\$471	\$18	\$18	\$0	\$507
Johnson	3	\$294	\$57	\$27	\$126	\$504
Lakes Region (Poultney)	5	\$216	\$57	\$0	\$159	\$432
Lamoille Valley (Morrisville)	5	\$171	\$141	\$3	\$78	\$393
Ludlow	3	\$339	\$66	\$60	\$69	\$534
Lunchbox Mobile (Irasburg, Canaan)	5	\$108	\$66	\$0	\$150	\$324
Lyndon (Lyndonville)	5	\$855	\$468	\$111	\$201	\$1,635
Manchester	4	\$327	\$117	\$27	\$132	\$603
Middlebury	16	\$2,958	\$1,722	\$90	\$723	\$5,493
Mills Riverside (Jericho)	5	\$294	\$54	\$0	\$12	\$360
Milton	2	\$147	\$51	\$33	\$12	\$243
Morrisville	7	\$2,031	\$1,251	\$24	\$486	\$3,792
Mount Tom (Woodstock)	2	\$54	\$21	\$0	\$3	\$78
New North End (Burlington)	3	\$525	\$306	\$27	\$219	\$1,077
Newport	11	\$3,726	\$3,840	\$429	\$3,081	\$11,076
Northfield	4	\$84	\$36	\$0	\$0	\$120
Northwest (St. Albans)	11	\$3,564	\$4,398	\$276	\$2,556	\$10,794
Norwich	10	\$1,926	\$489	\$90	\$411	\$2,916
Old North End (Burlington)	4	\$2,670	\$1,161	\$42	\$939	\$4,812
Peacham	3	\$6	\$3	\$0	\$30	\$39
Pittsford	2	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Putney	3	\$210	\$120	\$0	\$51	\$381
Randolph	5	\$618	\$777	\$81	\$306	\$1,782
Richford	3	\$453	\$720	\$54	\$684	\$1,911
Richmond	3	\$204	\$339	\$30	\$0	\$573
Royalton	9	\$243	\$288	\$0	\$75	\$606
Rutland County (Rutland)	13	\$1,683	\$1,155	\$111	\$738	\$3,687
Shelburne	5	\$126	\$90	\$102	\$78	\$396
South Burlington	3	\$363	\$219	\$84	\$123	\$789
Springfield	2	\$348	\$141	\$54	\$93	\$636
Stowe	6	\$453	\$69	\$30	\$0	\$552
Townshend	8	\$123	\$3	\$0	\$75	\$201
Vergennes	8	\$396	\$87	\$0	\$93	\$576
Vermont (Rutland, Fair Haven)	16	\$5,343	\$3,825	\$360	\$2,730	\$12,258
Waitsfield	3	\$120	\$27	\$0	\$18	\$165
Walloomsac (Bennington)	8	\$3,270	\$780	\$54	\$771	\$4,875
Waterbury	5	\$411	\$84	\$21	\$42	\$558
West River (Londonderry)	4	\$231	\$24	\$18	\$0	\$273
Williston	4	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Windsor	6	\$198	\$141	\$45	\$93	\$477
Winooski	7	\$2,883	\$591	\$174	\$681	\$4,329
Woodstock Market on the Green	5	\$66	\$24	\$30	\$9	\$129
TOTALS	322	\$59,184	\$36,615	\$3,762	\$23,514	\$123,075